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Letter dated 23 July 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to attach herewith a letter from Khaled Khoja, President of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, dated 22 July 2015, addressed to the President of the Security Council (see annex).

It would be greatly appreciated if the present letter and its annex were circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Abdallah Y. **Al-Mouallimi**
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 23 July 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

In advance of the Security Council's open debate on the Middle East, it is with great alarm and urgency that I draw your attention to the rising civilian death toll in Zabadani, Syria. For close to three weeks, Syrian regime forces and Hezbollah terrorists have overseen a murderous assault on Zabadani, pounding the Syrian town with more than 600 barrel bombs at a rate of more than 30 bombs a day.

According to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, the regime's indiscriminate aerial attacks on Zabadani have caused "unprecedented levels of destruction and many deaths among the civilian population". The regime's calculated siege of Zabadani, along with its targeting of civilian-occupied areas with warplanes and helicopters, have turned the town to rubble and left thousands without access to food, water and medical care.

In a statement issued on 22 July 2015, the Special Envoy called upon the Syrian government "to halt the use of crude and indiscriminate weapons, such as barrel bombs, on its own cities". It is imperative that the Security Council issue a similar demand and condemn the Syrian regime's ruthless targeting of civilians inside Zabadani. It is also imperative that the Council condemn the atrocities perpetrated by Hezbollah terrorists and Iranian forces across the Qalamoun region.

Located north-west of Rif Dimashq, near the Lebanese border, Zabadani has emerged as the centrepiece of the regime's collusion with Hezbollah terrorists and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. Hezbollah terrorists and Iranian forces now operate freely across Syria, brazenly perpetrating atrocities against Syrian civilians, with the full knowledge and consent of the Assad regime.

Tragically, foreign meddling in Zabadani is just the latest example of the growing regional ramifications of the Syrian crisis. For over four years, Syria's neighbours have had to bear the burden of Syria's humanitarian crisis — becoming home to a record 4 million refugees. Over the past 18 months, Syria itself has become home to the heinous terrorist group, ISIL, which now controls a third of Syrian territory and oversees a population of some 6 million people, more than 350,000 of whom are children.

The regional escalation of the Syrian crisis represents a direct threat to international peace and security. The Security Council has thus far failed to address or prevent that threat. It is critical that the Council do so now, including by adopting the following measures:

- **Condemning the atrocities perpetrated by Hezbollah** inside Syria and demanding that Hezbollah withdraw from Syrian territory
- **Ensuring utmost vigilance in the monitoring of the Iranian nuclear deal** and Security Council resolution 2231 (2015), which, when implemented, could potentially release billions of dollars to the Iranian regime, which the Security Council must ensure is not used to fuel and arm the Syrian regime's killing machine

- **Stopping the Syrian regime's indiscriminate aerial bombardment of Syria**, which is responsible for more than 60 per cent of all civilian deaths in Syria and the vast majority of deaths in Zabadani, by authorizing a safe zone

On 2 June 2015, Iranian General Qasem Soleimani warned: "The world will be surprised by what we [Iran] and the Syrian military leadership are preparing for the coming days". Today we know what that surprise entailed. In Zabadani and elsewhere, Iran is working to fund, fuel and facilitate Assad's atrocities, at the expense of ordinary civilians. Any agreement to ease sanctions against the Iranian regime must not come at the expense of the Syrian people.

On behalf of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces and the thousands of innocent men, women and children trapped inside Zabadani, I therefore ask that the Security Council condemn Iranian aggression in Syria and adopt the measures needed to save lives in Syria and stop the Syrian crisis from escalating further.

(*Signed*) Khaled **Khoja**
President of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution
and Opposition Forces

United Nations A/70/176–S/2015/560

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General Assembly
Seventieth session
Item 67 (b) of the provisional agenda*
New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support

Security Council
Seventieth year

Causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/291 to review progress made in the implementation of the recommendations contained in the 1998 report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871-S/1998/318).

This report takes stock of major peace and security developments in Africa during the past year and highlights the growing linkages between political, social and economic exclusion and violent conflict. Countering this trend will require inclusive people-centred approaches in the promotion of peace, security and socioeconomic development, as emphasized in the African Union's Agenda 2063 and its first 10-Year Implementation Plan.

Consistent with the mandate of General Assembly resolution 69/291 to develop policy proposals on emerging challenges, and in line with the aspiration of the African Union's Agenda 2063 for "An Africa of Good Governance, Democracy, Respect for Human Rights, Justice and Rule of Law", the report addresses the role of regional and subregional organizations in promoting democratic governance in Africa. It concludes with recommendations for strengthening the institutional capacities of regional and subregional organizations and for enhancing their cooperation with the United Nations and other partners in the promotion of democratic governance in Africa.

* A/70/150.

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I. Introduction

1. In 1998, following a request from the Security Council (S/PRST/1997/46), my predecessor undertook a comprehensive analysis of the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. The subsequent report (A/52/871-S/1998/318) proposed specific measures aimed at reducing conflict, building durable peace and promoting sustainable development in Africa.

2. In 2009, the General Assembly, in resolution 63/304, requested me to submit a report reviewing the status of implementation of the recommendations contained in the 1998 report. I issued a review report (A/65/152-S/2010/526) outlining the progress made, identifying persistent and emerging challenges facing Africa, as well as providing recommendations and proposals for a renewed engagement with Africa.

3. The review report highlighted that while "Africa has made substantial progress in building democratic governance, encouraging pluralism and strengthening the role of parliaments and civil society, ... not all countries have embraced these principles" (ibid., para. 41). The African Union equally reflects this outlook in its Shared Values Agenda, which underscores the importance of democratic governance for strengthening relations between governments and their peoples based on human rights, rule of law, accountability, transparency, popular participation, gender equality and inclusive development. Democratic governance thus constitutes one of the eight priorities of the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration of the Organization of African Unity/African Union and one of the seven aspirations of the Union's Agenda 2063.

4. In the above context, the present report has been prepared in consultation with the African Union, the regional economic communities and the United Nations system through the Interdepartmental Task Force on African Affairs, chaired by the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa. Following the introduction in section I, section II provides an update of major peace and security developments in Africa. Section III takes stock of key actions and initiatives undertaken by the United Nations system from July 2014 to June 2015 to implement the recommendations of the review report. The thematic section IV addresses the role of regional and subregional organizations in democratic governance in Africa. Lastly, section V contains conclusions and recommendations to enhance the critical partnership between Africa and the United Nations.

II. The year in review

5. Since my last report, Africa has made remarkable progress in defining its vision for "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven and managed by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena".[1] At its twenty-fourth summit, held in Addis Ababa in January 2015, the African Union adopted Agenda 2063 as its 50-year transformative agenda for peace, security and development. The African Union Assembly also declared 2015 the "Year of Women's Empowerment and Development towards Africa's Agenda 2063", reaffirming the important role of women and girls in driving the implementation of Agenda 2063.

[1] Preamble to the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration, adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union on 26 May 2013.

6. African countries and the regional economic communities are expected to align their development plans with Agenda 2063 and its first 10-Year Implementation Plan (2014-2023), which was adopted by the twenty-fifth African Union summit in South Africa in June 2015. The international community is also expected to further enhance its support to Africa in the implementation of Agenda 2063 and its first 10-Year Implementation Plan. I welcome the historic adoption of this agenda, which coincides with the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations.

7. Africa progressed overall in boosting economic growth, improving governance and elections management, preventing and resolving conflicts, combating terrorism and violent extremism, and responding to disease outbreak. African regional and subregional organizations and the international community, including the United Nations, supported the efforts of African countries in those areas. Major economic updates are highlighted in my report on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) (A/70/175).

8. On elections management, a number of countries, including Nigeria, Togo and Tunisia, showed improvements in the management of electoral processes. Challenges remain in preventing and mitigating election-related violence, which is often a result of lack of confidence in the credibility of the electoral process and election administration, genuine participatory politics, a winner-takes-all approach to elections and ineffective conflict management systems, among others. At the request of Member States, the United Nations provided preventive diplomacy, mediation, advisory or technical support to a number of African countries that undertook elections in the review period.

9. In Burkina Faso, the political situation is evolving following popular protests that led to the resignation of President Blaise Compaoré in October 2014. The Transitional Government under the leadership of President Michel Kafando has made significant progress in implementing elements of the Charter for the Transition. The National Independent Electoral Commission has released the electoral calendar and completed the revision of the electoral register. As the country prepares for presidential and general elections in October 2015, my Special Representative for West Africa will continue to work closely with the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the International Follow-up and Support Group for the Transition in Burkina Faso, to support the full implementation of the Charter for the Transition and the organization of credible elections.

10. In Burundi, a failed coup d'état and public protests against President Nkurunziza's decision to seek a controversial third presidential mandate led to electoral violence and an influx of more than 145,000 refugees into neighbouring countries. Amid heightened tensions, a number of senior government, opposition and civil society representatives went into exile, including the First Vice-President of Burundi, the Vice-President of the Constitutional Court and the Vice-President of the Independent National Electoral Commission. In the light of the ongoing violence and deteriorating human rights situation, the East African Community (EAC), the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the African Union, the United Nations and other stakeholders called for the postponement of presidential, legislative and local elections to allow for the creation of conditions conducive to the holding of free, peaceful and credible elections. Despite these calls, parliamentary elections took place on 29 June amidst electoral violence and a boycott by the opposition. My Special Envoy and Head of the United Nations Electoral Observation Mission in

Burundi and my Special Envoy and Representative for the Great Lakes Region and Central Africa all worked closely with the African Union, EAC, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and other partners to defuse tensions and support a national dialogue process to find a political solution to the crisis and help to create an environment conducive to peaceful, credible and inclusive elections.

11. Likewise in Somalia, the review of the Provisional Federal Constitution and preparations for elections continue to lag. While legislation authorizing a National Independent Electoral Commission was passed in February 2015 and its commissioners were appointed on 6 July 2015, the secretariat of the Commission is yet to be fully established. At the same time, Somalia made progress regarding peacebuilding and State-building. The formation of federal States continued, as did the deployment of civilian authorities to newly recovered areas. Leaders at the federal and regional levels began a structured dialogue on their relations and agreed on plans for integrating regional militias into the national army. Within the context of the New Deal Compact for Somalia, the Steering Committee of the Somalia Development and Reconstruction Facility approved, in March 2015, $100 million for peacebuilding and State-building programmes. My Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) will continue to support Somali stakeholders to intensify efforts towards the completion of the political process, constitutional referendum and organization of elections planned for 2016, as well as remain engaged in coordinating support for Somalia's stabilization and reconstruction.

12. Mali also made progress in its peace and reconciliation process, although the security situation remains fragile. Continued violence and terrorist attacks, including on civilians, threaten to undermine the peace process. Attacks on international forces, including the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), also increased. The Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali was signed between the Government of Mali and the Coordination of Azawad Movements on 20 June 2015. My Special Representative for Mali is working with partners to support the implementation of the Agreement and facilitate political dialogue and reconciliation through continued good offices. Efforts are also ongoing to strengthen the Mission's capabilities to protect civilians, improve security, assist the re-establishment of state authority in northern Mali and enhance regional security cooperation.

13. In the Central African Republic, the International Contact Group on the Central African Republic established and supported the international mediation process, which culminated in the signing of a cessation of hostilities agreement and formation of a new government in August 2014. In September 2014, the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (MISCA) transferred authority to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

14. Building on this momentum, the Bangui Forum for National Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, held in May 2015, adopted the Republican Pact for Peace, National Reconciliation and Reconstruction. The Transitional Government and armed groups also signed an agreement on the principles for disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation and integration. My Special Representatives for Central Africa and the Central African Republic will continue to support efforts to implement the recommendations of the Bangui Forum towards the holding of a constitutional

referendum and the conduct of credible presidential and legislative elections. Furthermore, following the allegations of sexual abuses involving foreign military forces in the Central African Republic, I have launched an independent expert review panel to review and assess the handling by the United Nations of those allegations.

15. Ongoing large-scale violence in South Sudan is undermining peace, stability and economic development in the country. Over 2 million people have been displaced since the crisis broke out in December 2013. Serious human rights violations, including the recruitment of child soldiers and sexual violence against women, persist. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) provided protection to about 166,000 displaced persons as of July 2015 and continues to provide shelter and assistance to internally displaced persons.

16. My Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan has continued to support peace efforts by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Mediation to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the conflict in South Sudan, in cooperation with my Special Representative for South Sudan and the African Union High Representative on South Sudan. They will sustain these engagements with partners on the mediation process and support national efforts to promote justice, accountability, healing and reconciliation. In this respect, I welcome South Sudan's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which oblige all parties to respect and uphold the rights of children and women.

17. In the Sudan's Darfur region, the implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur remained fraught with challenges, arising from human rights violations, sporadic ethnic tensions and armed confrontations that displaced at least 83,000 persons in the first half of 2015. Amidst discussions of an exit strategy for the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), the African Union-United Nations Acting Joint Special Representative for Darfur and my Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan are working closely with the African Union High-level Implementation Panel on the mediation process. In the Sudan's South Kordofan and Blue Nile States, my Special Envoy continues to support the efforts of the Implementation Panel to reach a cessation of hostilities and an agreement on security and political arrangements as well as humanitarian access for vulnerable populations.

18. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations, the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) continue to support the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region. However, persistent mistrust between signatories of the Framework, lack of progress in neutralizing the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), and the slow repatriation of elements of the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) have undermined the effectiveness of the Framework. Efforts are currently under way to strengthen the governance structures of the Framework. My Special Envoy to the Great Lakes Region will remain closely engaged with the team of Special Envoys in coordinating international support for this process.

19. In the period under review, terrorism and violent extremism remained a serious threat to peace and security on the continent. Chad, Egypt, Libya, the Niger, Nigeria, Somalia and Tunisia experienced terrorist attacks. In East Africa, Al-Shabaab perpetrated attacks in Kenya, including an attack on Garissa University College in

April 2015 that killed over 140 students. In Tunisia, the terrorist attack on the tourist hotel near Sousse in June 2015 killed over 30 persons. In Egypt, there were several attacks, including the bombing that killed the Egyptian Prosecutor General.

20. In Libya, the continuing armed violence, political deadlock, impunity and rising criminal and terrorist activities following the emergence of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant have exacerbated the dire security, human rights and humanitarian situation. Other adverse impacts of the crisis include the continued proliferation and trafficking of arms and influx of foreign terrorist fighters. My Special Representative for Libya, together with the International Contact Group for Libya, the African Union and other partners, remains fully engaged in supporting efforts to end the political deadlock and establish an inclusive government of national accord.

21. In Nigeria, Boko Haram continued to conduct deadly attacks on civilians, as well as carry out forced recruitment, abductions and systematic violations against women and children, including the increased use of girls as "human bombs". Boko Haram also expanded its attacks into Cameroon, Chad and the Niger, affecting thousands of innocent civilians and impacting the security, human rights and humanitarian situation throughout the region. In response, the Lake Chad Basin Commission countries launched a multinational joint task force, which has been conducting military operations against Boko Haram. The Task Force has recovered territory held by Boko Haram and rescued a number of abducted women and children. The States members of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and Benin are working with the African Union, the United Nations and other international partners to fully operationalize the Force. While welcoming those vital efforts, the United Nations is also engaging with the concerned countries to address allegations of serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law during some counter-insurgency operations.

22. In addition, the United Nations is in the process of scaling up its humanitarian presence in Boko Haram-affected areas. Persistent insecurity, logistics challenges, lack of access and funding gaps remain major challenges, however. My Special Representatives for Central Africa and West Africa and the Coordinator of the United Nations Response on the Regional Impact of Boko Haram will continue to support national and regional efforts aimed at preventing the expansion of Boko Haram and assisting affected communities.

23. A major setback in the review period was the outbreak of the Ebola virus disease in West Africa that led to extreme human suffering and claimed over 11,000 lives. In the most-affected countries — Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone — the disease crippled health-care capacities and threatened to reverse hard-won political and socioeconomic gains. Its impact was felt globally and was classified as a threat to international peace and security. A number of public and private actors, including the African Union Support to the Ebola Outbreak in West Africa and the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) provided both health and non-health support to the affected countries to stop, treat and prevent the spread of the disease. To help affected countries to fully recover from its impact, I convened the International Ebola Recovery Conference on 10 July 2015 at United Nations Headquarters in New York to ensure sustained international engagement as well as mobilize financial and non-financial resources for longer-term recovery efforts in the affected countries.

Enhanced focus on the nexus between peace, security and development

24. As highlighted in my report on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (A/70/175), Africa recorded strong growth performance in the review period, with an average economic growth rate of 4.6 per cent. However, Africa's growth has, for the most part, not been inclusive and neither created sufficient jobs nor increased income opportunities for the vast majority of the poor, particularly minorities, women and youth. Rather, inequality, poverty and unemployment persist, with potentials to undermine social cohesion, weaken State-society relations and trigger violent conflicts. That underscores the growing need for integrated approaches that address the peace, security, human rights and economic development nexus.

25. I emphasized the importance of such a holistic approach during my visit to the Horn of Africa with the Presidents of the World Bank and the Islamic Development Bank Group (IDBG) in October 2014, accompanied by senior representatives of the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank (AfDB), the European Union and IGAD. We pledged collective political support and a major financial assistance package to countries of the region, totalling over $8 billion. The World Bank committed $1.8 billion to, inter alia, boost economic growth and reduce poverty, while the European Union, AfDB and IDBG committed $3.7 billion, $1.8 billion and $1 billion, respectively, in support of peace, stability and economic development.

26. Recognizing the strong nexus between peace, security and development, the General Assembly, in resolution 69/291, welcomed the adoption of the African Union Agenda 2063 as the continent's overarching strategy for future structural transformation in Africa and reaffirmed the importance of supporting Agenda 2063.

III. Implementation of the recommendations contained in the review report

27. The present section highlights recent actions undertaken by the United Nations system to implement the recommendations contained in the 2010 review report of the Secretary-General (A/65/152-S/2010/526).

A. Institutional cooperation

28. Within the context of the Regional Coordination Mechanism, the joint United Nations-African Union Technical Working Group developed the framework for a renewed United Nations/African Union Partnership on Africa's Integration and Development Agenda (PAIDA). PAIDA, which was adopted by the twenty-fifth African Union summit in June 2015, is envisaged to succeed the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme for the African Union that expires in 2016. PAIDA is anchored in the Union's Agenda 2063 and highlights Africa's priorities that the United Nations is called upon to support in the period from 2017 to 2027. Building on the successes of the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme, which was initiated by my predecessor, the United Nations will continue to utilize the Regional Coordination Mechanism cluster system to better support Africa in the implementation of Agenda 2063 and other global development frameworks, including through PAIDA.

29. Progress was made in implementing the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security. The Security Council

and the African Union Peace and Security Council held their ninth joint consultative meeting in March 2015, which discussed, inter alia, means of enhancing joint cooperation in conflict prevention and crisis management in Africa. At the working level, the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU) and the African Union Peace and Security Department established joint teams to conduct horizon scanning and develop common positions on existing and emerging conflicts. UNOAU and the African Union Department of Political Affairs also developed a joint workplan to enhance cooperation on elections, constitutionalism and political analysis.

B. Conflict prevention and management and peacekeeping

30. On peacekeeping, the United Nations-African Union Joint Task Force on Peace and Security undertook, in September 2014, a lessons learned exercise on transitions from African Union peace support operations to United Nations peacekeeping operations, based on the cases of the Central African Republic and Mali. The exercise highlighted the need for joint action and close collaboration between both organizations throughout the planning stages of a peace operation.

31. In October 2014, I appointed a High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations to carry out a comprehensive assessment of the state of United Nations peace operations in the light of emerging needs. The African Union contributed to this process based on its common African position on the United Nations Review of Peace Operations. In the light of the centrality of Africa for United Nations peace operations, the Panel called for a stronger United Nations-African Union strategic partnership guided by a division of labour that is based on comparative advantages.

32. The United Nations Office to the African Union continued to work closely with the African Union on the operationalization of the African Standby Force (ASF). Exercise Amani Africa II, the main instrument for evaluating the operational readiness of ASF and its rapid deployment capability, is progressing and three of the five regional standby forces are expected to declare their operational readiness before the end of 2015. The Eastern Africa Standby Force has already declared operational readiness.

33. On conflict prevention and management, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the African Union Commission collaborated with ECOWAS and SADC to organize regional consultations that adopted the Accra and Maseru Declarations on the establishment of national infrastructures for peace. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the African Union Commission launched the youth network for a culture of peace in Africa in December 2014. Along with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, UNESCO also participated in the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign to end the recruitment of child soldiers in South Sudan.

C. Post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery

34. Given that peacebuilding continues to be at the core of the United Nations efforts to assist post-conflict countries in Africa, African countries and regional organizations were actively engaged in the review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture. Africa's active involvement in this process was particularly significant, as all six countries on the agenda of the Peacebuilding

Commission are in Africa and many other African countries benefit from the funds provided by the Peacebuilding Fund.

35. The African Union also developed an African position on the review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture that was presented to the Advisory Group of Experts, containing concrete recommendations for strengthening the performance and impact of the Architecture in Africa. I intend to use the report to further strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to assist post-conflict countries, including African countries, from relapsing back into conflict.

D. Sustained economic growth and sustainable development

36. In line with its Common African Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, Agenda 2063 and its first 10-Year Implementation Plan, Africa remained engaged in the ongoing process to formulate the post-2015 development agenda.[2] African States have consistently emphasized the need to ensure complementarity and synergies between Agenda 2063 and the post-2015 development agenda, including the sustainable development goals.

37. The 2015 integration segment of the Economic and Social Council on the theme "Employment creation and decent work for all", which was organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and the International Labour Organization, devoted a session to address the unemployment challenge in Africa that highlighted the implications of youth unemployment, notably its impact on regional and international peace and security. The session further underscored the relevance of infrastructure development and industrialization as critical pillars for economic growth and job creation.

38. In view of the challenges of land disputes in driving resource-based conflicts in Africa, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) continued to support the African Land Policy Initiative, which is a joint programme of the African Union, the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank.

E. Human rights and humanitarian affairs

39. Given the interdependence between peace, security, development and human rights, the United Nations intensified its human rights capacity development support to African Governments and institutions. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) provided secretariat support to the International Commission of Inquiry on the Central African Republic and the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea. Support was also provided in the Central African Republic, where the transitional authorities promulgated legislation on 3 June 2015 establishing a special criminal court for grave violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. In Burundi, OHCHR sustained a human rights presence even after the expiration of the mandate of the United Nations Office in Burundi in December 2014 and opened its country office in January 2015.

[2] See the report of the Secretary-General on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (A/69/161).

40. On humanitarian issues, Africa received about 73.5 per cent of the total funding from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Central Emergency Response Fund in 2014. That is the largest proportion the region has ever received in a single year. This trend was driven mainly by humanitarian demands related to the crises in the Central African Republic and South Sudan, the Ebola outbreak in West Africa and low funding for humanitarian operations in countries in the Sahel and Horn of Africa regions.

F. Governance, rule of law and the administration of justice

41. As the situations in Burkina Faso and Burundi have demonstrated, challenges of constitutional reforms to extend presidential term limits, political exclusion and marginalization and electoral violence, which I discussed in my 2013 report (A/68/220-S/2013/475), continue to persist, with implications for peace and security. In response, the United Nations continued to support national and regional efforts to promote good governance, rule of law and the administration of justice.

42. For instance, in view of the importance of youth participation in economic, social and political life for good governance, conflict prevention and peacebuilding, the 2015 Economic and Social Council Youth Forum demonstrated the aspirations of Africa's youth to participate in regional, national and local governance processes, and be part of the implementation and monitoring of the post-2015 development agenda. At national levels, the United Nations Democracy Fund continued to strengthen the voice and participation of civil society groups, including women and youth, in democratic governance in Africa. At the global level, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, in collaboration with the Department of Public Information and the Economic Commission for Africa, continued to undertake advocacy in support of the African Peer Review Mechanism during the Africa Week that was held in October 2014.

43. In Somalia, under the Global Focal Point arrangement for Police, Justice and Corrections Areas in the Rule of Law in Post-Conflict and other Crisis Situations, the United Nations supported national authorities in developing the Somalia Joint Rule of Law Programme, aimed at establishing unified, capable, accountable and rights-based federal police and justice institutions. In Mali, UNDP and MINUSMA supported national efforts to strengthen the capacity of State and judicial institutions, including the drafting of a new five-year strategy for justice sector reform.

G. Women's empowerment and gender equality in peace and security

44. The United Nations continued to support continental efforts to advance the women and peace and security agenda. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) provided technical and human resource support to the Office of the Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security, appointed by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, including in co-organizing the African regional consultative meeting in January 2015 on the Global Study on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), ahead of the Security Council's high-level review in October 2015.

45. On the margins of the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2015, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, in collaboration

with the Department of Public Information, UN-Women and the African Union, organized two high-level events under the themes "Continental results framework on women, peace and security in Africa" and "Emerging leadership of Africa's young women and girls towards 2063". A number of African Ministers of Gender and Women's Affairs, parliamentarians, private sector representatives and civil society organizations participated in both events. They highlighted some of the priorities of African women and girls on key forthcoming continental and global frameworks. These were further discussed at the 16th meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism, held on 28 and 29 March 2015, on the theme "United Nations system support to the African Union 2015 Year of Women's Empowerment and Development towards Africa's Agenda 2063".

H. Security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

46. Security sector reform has become a core component of the United Nations engagement across peacekeeping and special political missions in Africa. For instance, in Somalia, UNSOM supported the Federal Government in developing a national security architecture, undertaking civil service reform of the Ministry of Defence, establishing a weapons and ammunition management system and enhancing public financial management of the security sector, in cooperation with the World Bank. In Mali, MINUSMA supported the development of an international security sector reform coordination mechanism. In the Central African Republic, the United Nations provided assistance to the process of regrouping, cantoning, auditing and vetting of the country's armed forces.

47. UNSOM also facilitated the inaugural meeting of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Working Group chaired by the Somali Federal Ministry of National Security, to strategize on the National Programme for the Treatment and Handling of Disengaged Combatants. Subsequently, in January 2015, human rights monitors were deployed to all rehabilitation centres for disengaged combatants, marking an important milestone in ensuring compliance with international standards.

I. Countering terrorism and violent extremism

48. Owing to growing terrorist and extremist activities and threats during the review period, the United Nations accelerated its engagements with African Member States and regional and subregional organizations in developing measures to prevent and combat terrorism, under the framework of its Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

49. In April 2015, I jointly organized with the President of the General Assembly and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations a thematic debate on "Promoting Tolerance and Reconciliation: Fostering Peaceful, Inclusive Societies and Countering Violent Extremism" that brought together faith leaders and other stakeholders to discuss practical strategies to counter growing intolerance and violent extremism. The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force and its member entities, as well as the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, have been supporting African efforts to counter terrorism and address conditions conducive to the spread of violent extremism, including through the Integrated Assistance for

Countering Terrorism Initiative. Furthermore, the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism that I will present to the General Assembly later this year will address drivers of violent extremism and propose recommendations for Member States, the United Nations and other multilateral organizations.

50. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) continued to support efforts to promote the ratification and implementation of 19 international legal instruments on the prevention and combating of terrorism in Africa. In March 2015, UNODC and the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law launched a global project to strengthen the legal regime against emerging terrorist threats, to assist Member States in criminalizing foreign terrorist fighters in areas such as terrorist recruitment, incitement to terrorism and terrorism financing, among others. Nonetheless, the continued lack of agreement on the proposed comprehensive convention on international terrorism is hampering our efforts in this regard.

IV. Persistent and emerging challenges for Africa: the role of regional and subregional organizations in democratic governance in Africa

51. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/291, the present section highlights persistent and emerging challenges for Africa, focusing on the role of regional and subregional organizations in promoting democratic governance in Africa. It celebrates the momentum of progress that Africa has made towards entrenching democratic governance through the support of regional and subregional organizations. It also identifies remaining challenges and makes recommendations on the type of support required from the United Nations to further strengthen the role of African regional and subregional organizations in advancing democratic governance on the continent.

52. Democratic governance is an essential component and objective of the work of the United Nations. It represents a set of values, principles and mechanisms that provide the basis for the free expression of individuals under the protection of the rule of law and is at the heart of advancing human dignity, freedom and prosperity. While the nature of democratic governance may differ from one context to the other, depending on a country's political history, culture and societal ideals, its fundamental principles are universal.

53. Periodic elections, discussed in my 2013 report (A/68/220-S/2013/475), are a key feature of democratic governance. Other essential building blocks for democratic governance include effective and accountable institutions, human rights and the rule of law, and a vibrant and engaged civil society. Agenda 2063 calls for further investments in these areas, which are critical enablers for people-centred development in particular, and for Africa's structural transformation in general.

A. Regional and subregional organizations and democratic governance in Africa

54. Over the past two decades, and especially since the inception of the African Union in 2002, Africa has made considerable progress in strengthening democratic governance. African regional and subregional organizations, notably the African

Union, including its NEPAD and the African Peer Review Mechanism programmes, and the regional economic communities, have adopted and are implementing various normative and institutional frameworks on democracy, good governance, human rights and the rule of law. The Constitutive Act of the African Union highlights a determination to consolidate democratic governance principles, institutions and culture, as a basis for preventing and responding to conflicts and promoting inclusive and sustainable development. The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance has become pivotal for strengthening democratic governance, especially as it informs the practice of the African Union and the regional economic communities of condemning military coups and other modes of unconstitutional changes of governments, including by repudiating such regimes and suspending their membership in the African Union and the relevant regional economic community.

55. Currently, most of Africa's regional efforts on democratic governance are organized under the aegis of the African Governance Architecture, which was established in 2010 as the overarching political and institutional framework for promoting democratic governance in Africa and became operational in 2012. The Architecture has been instrumental in enhancing collaboration and synergy between the African Union, the regional economic communities, the United Nations and other stakeholders across five interrelated areas: democracy and elections, human rights and transitional justice, governance and anti-corruption, constitutionalism and the rule of law, and humanitarian affairs. Additionally, the African Governance Architecture promotes gender equality, women and youth empowerment and citizen's participation, among other cross-cutting issues.

56. I wish to highlight three examples to illustrate how the African Governance Architecture enhances coordination and collaboration at the regional level. First, its work on democracy and political, corporate and economic governance is largely driven by the African Peer Review Mechanism. In particular, the Mechanism's National Programme of Action provides useful entry points for implementing the African Governance Architecture at national levels, although effective implementation of the African Peer Review Mechanism programmes of action remains severely constrained by a lack of resources.

57. Second, the African Governance Architecture also enhances cooperation in electoral support, elections observation and monitoring. In this context, the African Union and the regional economic communities have developed guidance manuals and codes of conduct to increase professionalism and standardize procedures and methodologies for electoral management. They are also increasingly deploying observers to observe high-risk elections, thus contributing to enhancing the credibility of elections on the continent.

58. Third, in underscoring the nexus between democratic governance, peace and security, the African Governance Architecture complements the African Peace and Security Architecture. These linkages, however, need to be further strengthened at the operational level, especially between the African Governance Architecture and the conflict prevention organs of the African Peace and Security Architecture, such as the African Union Peace and Security Council and the Panel of the Wise. The Agenda 2063 flagship project on "Silencing the guns by 2020", discussed in my 2014 report (A/69/162-S/2014/542), provides a promising opportunity for action in this regard. The support of the Security Council for this initiative, as expressed in its

presidential statement (S/PRST/2014/27), provides a basis for additional United Nations assistance to these African Union organs.

59. At subregional levels, the regional economic communities are the implementing pillars of the African Governance Architecture. In addition, the communities have equally adopted and are implementing their region-specific policies aimed at promoting democratic governance in their member States. For instance, the East African Community is implementing its Protocol on Good Governance, ECOWAS its Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, IGAD its Protocol on Democracy, Governance and Elections, and SADC its Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections.

60. As a result, many African countries have constitutions with presidential term limits and constraints on unlimited power. Also, Africa has seen an increase in the conduct of periodic multiparty free and fair elections. Most African countries have acceded to various international and regional instruments on democratic governance and are undertaking various reforms to establish strong democratic institutions. There is a growing enabling environment for private sector development to enhance productivity and growth. A growing number of governments are increasingly recognizing the importance of civil society and have also institutionalized measures to promote civil society participation in politics and governance.

B. Persisting challenges in promoting democratic governance in Africa

61. While these efforts have contributed to enhancing democratic governance, challenges remain, as the situations in Burkina Faso and Burundi have shown. Persisting challenges to democratic governance in Africa include continued human rights violations, weak State institutions, crises of State legitimacy arising from an inability to deliver basic services, militarization of societies including through the resurgence of military coups as well as rebel and terrorist activities, mismanagement and politicization of diversity, social and economic exclusion and inequalities, and poor coordination and harmonization of regional and subregional approaches. The political landscape in the majority of countries continues to be dominated by de facto one-party systems, and a winner-takes-all approach to elections. As illustrated in Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, incumbents hoping to prolong their time in power increasingly face significant public resistance, often undermining efforts to promote democratic governance. In addition, the participation of women in political processes is marginal.

62. These critical challenges are broadly organized in six categories in this report: preventing and mitigating electoral violence; human rights and the protection of vulnerable populations; growing insecurity and militarization of societies; limited capacity of the judiciary and anti-corruption institutions; strained State-civil society relations; and challenge of coordination and harmonization.

1. Preventing and mitigating electoral violence

63. In spite of progress being made in the conduct and management of periodic elections, a key challenge remains how to effectively prevent and mitigate election-related violence, especially in the light of a pervasive winner-takes-all approach to elections. Experience gained over the past decade confirms that prospects for prevention and mitigation are best when efforts combine both political and technical

elements, address root causes of conflicts, and are sustained over the long term and conceived within a broader strategic framework that supports and builds upon regional capacities and frameworks in Africa.

64. In this respect, the African Union and the regional economic communities are increasingly utilizing their institutional mechanisms for preventing, managing and resolving election-related conflicts, such as the Pan African Network of the Wise, special envoys and representatives, to support and complement the efforts of the African Union Peace and Security Council. The United Nations has supported regional and subregional organizations in this effort and has itself employed mediation and good offices in support of peaceful elections. This political approach has proven successful, including recently in Nigeria, where the country had its first peaceful transition of power to the opposition since moving to civilian rule in 1999. However, effective early warning and response to electoral violence, and capacities to ensure non-violent electoral processes, are still limited.

2. Human rights and the protection of vulnerable populations

65. Most African countries have signed and ratified a wide range of international and regional human rights instruments, including on the rights of women and children. They have also established measures and institutions to enforce and monitor implementation. The fulfilment of human rights obligations is inextricably linked to the promotion of democratic governance, and regional organizations have a key role to play in this regard.

66. For instance, the African Union adopted an approach of non-indifference, building on a collective responsibility to protect citizens from grave harm, such as human rights abuses, genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and unconstitutional changes of government. In practice, however, legitimate concerns about the actual state of human rights protection in Africa remain, which is particularly alarming in conflict situations and in countries experiencing terrorist threats, as is evident in Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Libya, Nigeria and South Sudan, among other countries. As governments have the primary responsibility to protect human rights, regional and subregional organizations sometimes find it challenging to effectively mobilize the necessary political will and resources to ensure compliance with existing human rights instruments at the national level.

3. Insecurity and continued militarization of societies

67. The African Union policy framework on security sector reform outlines a set of principles and measures for promoting democratic governance and oversight of the security sector, civil-military relations and reforming the armed forces. The security sector reform support of the United Nations to the African Union and regional economic communities focuses, inter alia, on strengthening the civilian oversight roles of the security sector, including by relevant ministries and parliaments, and facilitating dialogue aimed at ensuring a common national vision of security and of security sector reforms.

68. Despite these efforts, there are still significant security challenges. Years of autocratic and military rule in most African countries engendered a culture of militarization and regime protection that is antithetical to the norms and values of democratic governance. This militarized culture has proven relatively resistant to

change in some countries. The emergence of new rebel, militia, extremist and terrorist groups and their growing ability to undermine the role of governments has further complicated the security situation and is fast eroding democratic gains in some countries.

4. Limited capacity of critical democratic institutions

69. Transparent and accountable public institutions are critical for enhancing democratic governance. There have been concerted efforts to strengthen the capacities of State institutions, including the judiciary, to enhance social justice and social cohesion, ensure the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and combat corruption, among others. Yet, the capacities — financial, technological and human — of these institutions, in most African countries, are still limited and inadequate, in a manner that affects their independence.

70. African regional and subregional organizations themselves have their own internal and institutional challenges that hinder their ability to foster democratic norms and to help build effective institutions at the national level. For instance, they remain reliant on external financial support to effectively implement their respective democratic governance programmes. To ensure predictable and sustainable programming, African Governments need to ensure the provision of adequate resources at both the national and regional levels.

5. Relations between civil society and governments

71. The role of a vibrant civil society, including an independent media, is the bedrock of democratic governance. As the events in North Africa and Burkina Faso showed, popular uprisings and mass demonstrations in defence of democracy are a vivid reminder that beyond norms and policy instruments, it is ordinary citizens who are the custodians of democracy.

72. Despite an increasingly active civil society, however, there is need for continued capacity-building for civil society organizations, including on enhanced understanding of their relations with the State, policy research and advocacy to strengthen their contributions to democratic governance. Governments also need to do more to systematically engage civil society as important partners rather than adversaries in advancing democratic governance. The continued suppression of civil society, and political and economic exclusion, especially of youths and women, will only exacerbate human rights violations, trigger violent conflicts and slow down progress on democratic governance, economic development and sustainable peace.

73. The African Union, NEPAD, the African Peer Review Mechanism and the regional economic communities have developed a range of policies and instruments to facilitate the engagement of civil society and the private sector in democratic governance. Significant gaps remain, however, between norm-setting and norm implementation, which should be addressed, especially at national levels, to promote African civil society participation in democratic governance across the continent.

6. Challenge of coordination and harmonization

74. African regional and subregional organizations are developing at different paces, and this is reflected in the level of progress attained in developing and implementing their respective democratic governance instruments. Consequently,

there is a need to accelerate efforts to harmonize those instruments and enhance coordination at operational levels between the African Union, regional economic communities and the United Nations, taking into consideration the principles of subsidiarity and comparative advantages. In the absence of a coordinated and coherent approach, norms and instruments could likely be inconsistently applied, undermining the credibility of regional and subregional interventions and creating opportunities for national actors to exploit the situation.

75. The positive outcome of a coordinated approach was evident in Burkina Faso, where swift joint action by the United Nations, the African Union and ECOWAS was instrumental in preventing a further deterioration of the situation and bringing about a national consensus on the way forward. Against this backdrop, the situation in Burundi would also benefit from enhanced collaboration between the East African Community, the African Union and the United Nations towards finding a consensual political solution to the current crisis.

C. Enhanced United Nations support to regional and subregional organizations in democratic governance in Africa

76. The United Nations has been a longstanding and committed partner to African countries, the African Union, NEPAD, the African Peer Review Mechanism, the regional economic communities and civil society organizations in ongoing efforts to promote democratic governance. Given the new impetus provided by Agenda 2063, the United Nations will continue to enhance its support to Africa in promoting democratic governance within the context of the implementation of the first 10-Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063. The proposals under consideration in the intergovernmental negotiation process on the post-2015 development agenda further give credence to the need for this support, as it includes some of the aspirations on democratic governance enshrined in Agenda 2063.

77. The United Nations, including through the UNDP Democratic Governance Group, will further enhance support to African regional and subregional organizations in fostering democratic governance through, inter alia, institutional and human capacity development, policy advice, technical support and strategic partnerships. The United Nations support to the African Union and the regional economic communities will also be channelled through the Regional Coordination Mechanism. In this respect, additional efforts will be made to strengthen the efficacy of the Mechanism's cluster system, as well as of the Interdepartmental Task Force on African Affairs, to better deliver coherent and coordinated United Nations support to Africa, in the context of the implementation of Agenda 2063 and its first 10-Year Implementation Plan.

78. Building on our joint framework for enhanced partnership with the African Union and the regional economic communities in peace and security, the United Nations will also support efforts to strengthen the institutional and operational linkages between the African Governance Architecture and the African Peace and Security Architecture. Similarly, efforts will be made to enhance collaboration, in particular between the African Union, the regional economic communities and United Nations peacekeeping operations, special political missions and regional offices in the area of democratic governance.

79. The United Nations will also, in the context of the Human Rights Up Front initiative of the Secretary-General, continue to strengthen collaboration with the African Union and the regional economic communities to support African efforts in preventing and responding to serious human rights violations. Further, the United Nations will support implementation of the African Union Human Rights Strategy for Africa, including through increased support to the Pan African Parliament, the African Court and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, and national human rights institutions. The United Nations will also continue to leverage civil society participation in democratic governance in Africa, including through the United Nations Democracy Fund. Efforts in this regard will particularly focus on women and youth.

80. The United Nations will further engage African regional and subregional organizations in utilizing its Monitoring Mechanism, established by the General Assembly in resolution 66/293, to review commitments made by all relevant parties to democratic governance in Africa.

V. Conclusion and recommendations

81. **The year 2015 marks the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations and will witness the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda and the financing for development outcomes. At the same time, 2015 witnessed the adoption of two new policy frameworks for Africa's transformation and renaissance, notably Agenda 2063 and its first 10-Year Implementation Plan. These international and regional frameworks are complementary in their aspiration to enhance inclusive people-centred development in Africa. It is important that the international community and the United Nations ensure coherence and synergy between the global and continental frameworks and fully support their implementation in Africa. For instance, the international community and the United Nations should continue to support the African Peace and Security Architecture and the African Governance Architecture to address new issues and challenges in peace operations and post-conflict peacebuilding, in ways that address the concerns and aspirations contained in the African positions on these issues.**

82. **To further enhance the strategic partnership between the United Nations and the African Union, Member States should extend support for the implementation of PAIDA, which is anchored in Agenda 2063 and will succeed the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme for the African Union. In the light of their role as implementing agencies for Agenda 2063 and its first 10-Year Implementation Plan, the international community and the United Nations should strengthen their cooperation and support for the regional economic communities, including through PAIDA.**

83. **The role of African regional and subregional organizations, notably the African Union, NEPAD, the African Peer Review Mechanism and the regional economic communities, remains critical for complementing the efforts of African Governments to promote and consolidate democratic governance. The international community and the United Nations should increase their support to the African Union in strengthening the institutional capacities of all organs and instruments of the African Governance Architecture, including the African Peer Review Mechanism, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights and**

the Pan African Parliament, as well as of the regional economic communities in addressing structural challenges to democratic governance.

84. An enhanced role of the Regional Coordination Mechanism and the Interdepartmental Task Force on African Affairs is essential for fostering system-wide collaboration in monitoring international commitments to democracy, good governance, human rights and the rule of law, within the context of the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism, Agenda 2063 and PAIDA. In this regard, the United Nations should further strengthen the role of the Regional Coordination Mechanism and the Interdepartmental Task Force on African Affairs so as to enhance coherence and coordination between the United Nations, the African Union, NEPAD, the African Peer Review Mechanism, the regional economic communities and other relevant organs in consolidating peace and security, democratic governance, and development in Africa.

85. The African Peer Review Mechanism remains the key Africa-led voluntary process for the promotion of economic, political and corporate governance on the continent. It is vital for providing timely remedial measures for addressing deficits in democratic governance. The international community and the United Nations should assist the Mechanism in addressing challenges it faces to conduct national reviews and implement its national programmes of action, including on institutional reforms.

86. The importance of civil society, particularly women and youth, for Africa's future is reflected in the decision of the African Union to designate 2015 the Year of Women's Empowerment and Development towards Africa's Agenda 2063, and 2016 as the Year of Human Rights, focusing on the human rights of women. The United Nations should strengthen support to African Member States and regional and subregional organizations to enhance the active participation of civil society, including women and youth, in processes to promote democracy, good governance, human rights and the rule of law.

87. Agenda 2063 underscores the need for well-functioning, accountable, inclusive and participatory political and economic systems and institutions that are also capable of effectively ensuring checks and balances. African Member States, with the support of the United Nations, should further strengthen the capacities of critical democratic institutions to enhance public service delivery and accountability. These include national human rights institutions, elections management bodies, parliaments, media, civil service, anti-corruption bodies, judiciaries, law enforcement and security institutions, among others.

88. In the light of the critical linkages between democratic governance, human rights, durable peace and sustainable development, the United Nations should continue to increase synergies between the African Peace and Security Architecture and the African Governance Architecture in preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction, within the context of the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security. In particular, the United Nations should enhance joint field-based actions with African regional and subregional organizations in strengthening early warning and democratic security oversight capacities, preventing election-related violence and addressing conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and violent extremism. The United Nations should also enhance cooperation with the regional economic communities in

supporting democratic governance through its regional offices, special political missions and peacekeeping missions.

89. It is critical that the United Nations accelerate action to support African regional and subregional organizations in the implementation of the "Silencing the guns" flagship project, in accordance with the Security Council's presidential statement of 16 December 2014 (S/PRST/2014/27), in which the Council "expresses its readiness to contribute and calls on all, in particular relevant United Nations entities, to help achieve this goal including by considering defining a concrete five-year actionable plan in support of the goal of achieving a conflict-free Africa by 2020".

90. In the light of the reviews of United Nations peace operations, the United Nations peacebuilding architecture and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, there is an urgent need for the United Nations to identify practical and effective frameworks and mechanisms to help to integrate the perspectives, interests and concerns of African regional actors in the planning and implementation of security and development strategies for African countries in conflict and post-conflict situations more systematically and consistently, so as to better articulate the regional dimension of conflict and post-conflict challenges.

91. In the light of the impact of the Ebola virus disease, the international community, including the United Nations, should continue to support response efforts led by national governments to get to zero cases and address the profound socioeconomic impact of the outbreak. Stakeholders must pursue partnerships that help the affected countries to become resilient and self-sufficient by strengthening national capacity, including of the public health systems across the region and Africa as a whole.